

USS Biloxi (CL-80)

Biloxi (CL-80) was laid down on 9 July 1941 at Newport News, Va.; by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co.; launched on 23 February 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Katharine G. Braun, wife of the Mayor of Biloxi; and commissioned at the Norfolk Navy Yard on 31 August 1943, Capt. Daniel Michael McGurl [USNA '20] in command.

The light cruiser fitted out at Norfolk until 17 September when she began shakedown training in the Chesapeake Bay. This included plane launch and recovery drills, structural test gun firing, day spotting practice and anti aircraft drills. The crew also conducted an unplanned but successful man overboard drill when S2c Scott was knocked overboard by a training gun mount.

The *Biloxi* had three commanding officers during her 3 ¼ years of active duty, all graduates of the United States Naval Academy, Class of 1920:

- **CAPT Daniel Michael McGurl [02/23/1943 - 10/20/1944]**
 - **CAPT Paul Ralph Heineman [10/20/1944 - 06/1945]**
 - **CAPT Allan Douglas Blackledge [06/1945 - 5/18/1946]**
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Biloxi departed Okinawa on 20 April 1945 and steamed east to Ulithi, where she arrived on the 24th. After receiving battle repairs alongside *Vulcan* (AR 5), the light cruiser continued east, arriving at San Francisco via Pearl Harbor on 11 May. Moving into Bethlehem Shipbuilding Co. the warship received three weeks of long overdue repairs and machinery maintenance. CAPT Allan D. Blackledge took command of *Biloxi* from Capt Heineman in June 1945. Following completion of this work on 6 July, *Biloxi* conducted two weeks of post overhaul checks and refresher training out of San Diego and San Clemente. These evolutions were disrupted on 14 July when a water feed line ruptured in the aft fire room, flashed into steam and burned eight men, none seriously.

Returning west on 19 July 1945, *Biloxi* practiced shore bombardment exercises in Hawaii before departing Pearl Harbor on 2 August. While enroute to Ulithi, the warship conducted a long range shore bombardment of Wake on 8 August, primarily to train her gunners for upcoming operations against Japan. After a stop at Ulithi on 12 August, she refueled and headed for Leyte, arriving in San Pedro Bay on 14th. While anchored there, the crew heard the Japanese surrender announcement at 0815 the following morning.

Departing the Philippines for Okinawa on 20 August, the light cruiser arrived there three days later and spent the next three weeks awaiting orders. Putting to sea on 16 September, *Biloxi* proceeded to Nagasaki, Japan, to evacuate POWs. Arriving there on the 18th of September, her crew saw the damage caused by the atomic bomb and took on 11 U.S., 17 British, one Australian, one Canadian, and 187 Dutch "recovered Allied military personnel." These men were delivered to Okinawa on 21 September 1945. Steaming back to Japan, the warship made stops at Nagasaki, Wakayama, and Hiro Wan as the American Occupation Forces consolidated their positions ashore. During October, some officers from ships' company took part in inspections of surviving Japanese shipping at Kure.

Underway 9 November, *Biloxi* picked up passengers at Okinawa on the 11th, before sailing to Pearl Harbor and then San Francisco, arriving at the latter port on 27 November. The warship moved to Port Angeles, Wash., 15 January 1946 and reported to Commander, 19 Fleet, for inactivation. On 18 May 1946 she was placed in commission in reserve at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. CAPT Allan D. Blackledge ended his command of the *Biloxi* on this date. On 29 October 1946 the *Biloxi* went out of commission in reserve. Her name stricken from the Navy list on 1 December 1961 and she was sold for scrap to Puget Sound Towing & Barge Co. on 29 March 1962.

Biloxi (CL-80) was awarded nine battle stars for her World War II service.

Source: Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Navy Department, Naval History and Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/b6/biloxi-i.htm>